procurement and distribution of foodgrains and also disposal of Food Corporation of India's surplus stocks;

(b) if so, whether report on price policy for kharif crops of 2001-2002 season was submitted to Government recently;

(c) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(d) by when these suggestions are likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) to (d) The Report of Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices on price policy for Kharif Crops of 2001-2002 is at present under consideration of the Government. The contents of the report are kept secret till the announcement of the price policy.

PIL on Starvation Deaths

1223. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:
SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH:
SHRI C.O. POULOSE:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court has recently asked the Centre and six States to respond to a PIL alleging starvation deaths in drought and famine-hit areas because of the Food Corporation of India's failure to supply foodgrains;

(b) if so, whether the Centre and the States have already submitted their replies to the Supreme Court;

(c) if so, what are the details thereof;

(d) what is the Supreme Court's reaction on this issue; and

(e) whether any directive has been issued by the Supreme Court to deal with such failures in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (e) The Supreme Court in its interim order dated 23.7.2001 on a Public Interest Litigation filed by People's Union for Civil Liberties has directed the States to see that all PDS shops, if closed are reopened and start functioning within one week from the date of order and regular supplies are made.

Two weeks time has been granted by the apex court for filling of reply affidavits by Union of India, FCI and the concerned State Governments.

Appointment of PDS Dealers in Bihar

1224. PROF. A. LAKSHMISAGAR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the recent mid term appraisal of the Ninth Plan has revealed that the people living below the poverty line in Bihar have ceased to be the beneficiaries of PDS and has indicated the procedure for appointment of PDS dealers in the State;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what measures are contemplated by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) and (b) Planning Commission in the Mid-Term appraisal of 9th Five Year Plan has cited a study in Bihar which has reported *inter alia* that on the whole, only Government staff, agents and retailers benefit from the Public Distribution System.

Public Distribution System (PDS) is operated under the joint responsibility of Government of India and the State Governments/ UT Administrations. While the Central Government is responsible for procuring and making available to the States the PDS commodities to the Principal Distribution Centres identification of